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Assessing English-language learners in mainstream classrooms

Mainstream classroom teachers need practical ways to assess English-language learners. Then they can evaluate students' progress and plan more effective literacy instruction.

A great many classroom teachers in the United States find themselves teaching English-language learners (ELLs). The total number of ELLs in the public schools is more than 4.5 million students, or 9.6% of the total school population (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). This number continues to rise because more than a million new U.S. immigrants arrive annually (Martin & Midgely, 1999). Not all communities have large populations of ELLs, but many do, and others will experience changes in the diversity of their populations, especially schools in the inner suburbs of metropolitan centers (Hodgkinson, 2000/2001).

Because assessment is a critical part of effective literacy instruction, it is important for classroom teachers to know how to evaluate ELLs' literacy development. Nevertheless, many teachers are unprepared for the special needs and complexities of fairly and appropriately assessing ELLs. To complicate the matter further, the U.S. federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 has established assessment mandates that all teachers must follow. Title I of NCLB requires that ELLs attending public schools at levels K–12 should be assessed in the various language domains (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writ-

ing). According to NCLB, ELLs must be included in statewide standardized testing. The results of the tests are reported in a segregated data format that highlights the achievement of each subgroup of students. As with all subgroups under NCLB, ELLs must make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the schools to meet state requirements (Abedi, 2004).

Over the years, ELLs have historically lagged behind their native-English-speaking counterparts, and this achievement gap is not likely to close in the near future (Strickland & Alvermann, 2004). ELLs come to public schools in large numbers, and they have unique learning and assessment needs. ELLs bring a wide range of educational experiences and academic backgrounds to school. They represent a variety of socioeconomic, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds. In school, ELLs need to simultaneously develop English competence and acquire content knowledge. An overwhelming majority of assessment tools are in English only, presenting a potential threat to the usefulness of assessments when ELLs' lack of English prevents them from understanding test items.

Whether ELLs are newcomers to the United States or from generations of heritage language speakers, they are disadvantaged if assessment, evaluation, and the curriculum do not make allowances for their distinctive differences (Gay, 2001; Gitlin, Buendía, Crossland, & Doumbia, 2003; Greenfield, 1997). This article provides recommendations for literacy assessment practices for teachers of ELLs that will inform their instruction.

Toward appropriate assessment of ELLs

The assessment of ELLs is a “process of collecting and documenting evidence of student learning and progress to make informed instructional, placement, programmatic, and/or evaluative decisions to enhance student learning, as is the case of assessment of the monolingual or mainstream learner” (Ehlers-Zavala, 2002, pp. 8–9). Assessments of ELLs, however, are more critical. Many teachers have little experience with ELLs and may not understand the challenges faced by students in the process of acquiring English. Because assessment practices pave the way to making instructional and evaluative decisions, teachers need to consider all educational stakeholders (i.e., the students themselves, parents, administrators, and other teachers) as they plan to assess students from different cultural backgrounds.

Hurley and Blake (2000) provided guiding principles that teachers should consider when assessing ELLs:

- Assessment activities should help teachers make instructional decisions.
- Assessment strategies should help teachers find out what students know and can do...not what they cannot do.
- The holistic context for learning should be considered and assessed.
- Assessment activities should grow out of authentic learning activities.
- Best assessments of student learning are longitudinal...they take place over time.
- Each assessment activity should have a specific objective-linked purpose. (pp. 91–92)

Furthermore, because the NCLB legislation drives state standards, teachers should consider those standards as they assess ELLs. Standards can assist teachers in planning effectively linked instruction and assessment practices for ELLs at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum. In the absence of district or state standards, teachers can consult the standards that professional organizations, such as Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL; 1997) have prepared (see [www.tesol.org/s_tesol/seccss.asp?CUD=95&](http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/seccss.asp?CUD=95&DID=1565)

[DID=1565](http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/seccss.asp?CUD=95&DID=1565)). They may also consult the work other professionals have developed (Lenski & Ehlers-Zavala, 2004).

Assessing English-language learners

Teachers who assess ELLs must ask themselves a number of basic questions such as these: Who am I going to assess? How am I going to assess them? Why am I going to assess them? What specific aspects of literacy am I going to assess? When am I going to administer the assessment? Can I evaluate my students in my own classroom? In order to answer these questions, teachers should investigate their students’ prior schooling before assessment.

Learn about ELLs’ literacy backgrounds

English-language learners come to public schools with vastly different backgrounds. Teachers should never assume that students who share the same language will observe the same cultural practices or understand the same types of texts. Even speakers of the same language exhibit differences in their lexicon, in the grammar that they use, and in the formality and informality of expression that is acceptable in their everyday lives (Chern, 2002). ELL teachers should, therefore, become aware of their students’ backgrounds before assessment takes place.

According to Freeman and Freeman (2004), ELLs fall into four categories that help teachers understand their background: newly arrived students with adequate formal schooling, newly arrived students with limited formal schooling, students exposed to two languages simultaneously, and long-term English-language learners. (See Table 1 for a complete description of these categories.) Knowing which category best describes an ELL can help teachers begin to learn about their students.

Understanding that ELLs come from different types of literacy backgrounds can help teachers as they develop appropriate assessments. Students’ needs are mediated by who the students are, which includes their type of literacy background. Oftentimes, an understanding of students is fogged

TABLE 1
Categories of English-language learners

Newly arrived students with adequate formal schooling

- Have been in the country for fewer than five years,
- Have had an adequate degree of schooling in their native country,
- Perform in reading and writing at grade level,
- Find it relatively easy to catch up with their native-English-speaking peers,
- Have difficulty with standardized tests,
- Have parents who are educated speakers of their L1 (native language),
- Developed a strong foundation in their L1,
- Demonstrate the potential to make fast progress in English, and
- Have found it easy to acquire a second or third language.

Newly arrived students with limited formal schooling

- Have recently arrived in an English-speaking school (fewer than five years),
- Have experienced interrupted schooling,
- Have limited native-language and literacy skills,
- Perform poorly on achievement tasks,
- May not have had previous schooling,
- May experience feelings of loss of emotional and social networks,
- Have parents who have low literacy levels, and
- Could have difficulty learning English.

Students exposed to two languages simultaneously

- Were born in the United States but have grown up in households where a language other than English is spoken,
- Live in communities of speakers who primarily communicate in their L1 or go back and forth between languages,
- Have grown up being exposed to two languages simultaneously,
- May have not developed academic literacy in either L1 or L2 (second language),
- Often engage in extensive code-switching, thus making use of both linguistic systems to communicate, and
- Have acquired oral proficiency in a language other than English first but may not have learned to read or write in that language.

Long-term English-language learners

- Have already spent more than five years in an English-speaking school,
- Have literacy skills that are below grade level,
- Have had some English as a second language classes or bilingual support, and
- Require substantial and ongoing language and literacy support.

Note. Adapted from Freeman and Freeman (2003).

by the use of acronyms such as “ELLs,” which, on the surface, seem to point at group homogeneity rather than heterogeneity. Differences are blurred in the use of such acronyms; consequently, there is always the potential to forget how diverse ELLs truly are. Understanding each ELL’s background will help a teacher to choose the most appropriate assessment and instruction.

Predictability log. An ELL’s knowledge base might include traditional and nontraditional literacies. Teachers can understand the types of literacies ELLs bring to the classroom by completing a predictability log (PL). A PL helps teachers understand their students’ prior literacy experiences and the factors that helped shape them. (See Table 2 for an example.) According to Snyder (2003), assessing students’ abilities to predict can assist teachers in creating a learning environment that is

rich in predictable printed language. To use a PL, teachers should target the questions that are most relevant for the students’ situations. Teachers can gather data for a PL from a variety of sources: by interviewing the students, talking with the students’ parents, observing the students in a classroom context, and talking with others who know the students (e.g., family members, other teachers, community members). A bilingual specialist or someone who is fluent in the students’ native language can also be of assistance in completion of the log. Whether the teacher or another adult gathers the data, the information can provide the teacher with a deeper grasp of the students’ literacy backgrounds.

Using predictability logs. Information from PLs can help teachers understand that students who have been exposed to effective literacy practices in other contexts, such as their countries of origin,

may be further along in their literacy development. Furthermore, in understanding that ELLs differ in the literacy practices of their native language (L1), teachers may be in a better position to determine whether those literacy practices are facilitating or interfering with the development of literacy in English—the learners' second language. This situation is contingent upon the degree of similarity or difference between English and the native language of the students. An example of this would be the knowledge students bring to the learning process regarding concepts of print. An ELL who is a native speaker of Spanish may benefit from having been exposed to concepts about print in Spanish because they are similar to those a native speaker of English would know (i.e., reading from left to right). Conversely, an ELL who is a native speaker of Arabic may display a different understanding of concepts about print learned in Arabic (i.e., reading from right to left).

Decide on the purposes for assessment

Once teachers know about a student's literacy background and knowledge base, they need to think about the reasons for further assessment. The purposes for assessment can be quite diverse; they can range from student placement to instructional decisions and from program development to program evaluation. It is critical that teachers identify the purposes for assessing their students before choosing the assessment instrument to be used.

As teachers consider the purposes for assessment, they should ask, "Does my assessment connect to the language and content standards and goals?" Teachers should also think about whether their assessment practices are consistent with their own instructional objectives and goals. When teachers think about the purposes for assessment beforehand, they can make better decisions about what information they should gather about their students.

Teachers can use language and content standards as the basis for what ELLs ought to know, and these standards then provide the purposes for assessment. For example, one of the TESOL standards is "Students will use learning strategies to extend their communicative competence" (TESOL, 1997, p. 39). Teachers can use this statement to develop an instrument to assess how well students are

TABLE 2
Predictability log questions

Language use

- What languages does the student know and use?
- What types of alphabets does the student know?
- What language and literacy experiences interest the student?

Knowledge

- What is the student's cultural background?
- What does the student enjoy doing out of school?
- In what areas or ways has the student helped classmates?
- What has the student said or what stories has the student told?

Events or experiences that matter to the student

- What has happened to the student recently that has been important?
- Have any major events occurred, especially recently, that have been of great interest to the student?

Narrative

- What kinds of stories does the student enjoy?
- What specific stories does the student know well?
- Can the student tell a story about a relative or a good friend?
- What activities is the student involved in?

Relationship

- What is the student's family situation?
- Who are the key family members in the student's life?
- Has the student left anyone behind in his or her home country?
- Who are the student's best friends?
- Is there anyone whom the student talks about frequently?
- Whom might you contact to follow up on one of the student's interests or needs?

Aesthetics and ethics

- What personal belongings does the student bring to class or wear?
- What objects or ideas appeal to the student?
- What values has the student expressed through actions or stories?

Note. Adapted from Snyder (2003).

satisfying the standard. Figure 1 provides an example of an assessment that Ehlers-Zavala (second author) developed based on the standard.

Decide how to assess students

Teachers of ELLs should conduct multiple forms of evaluation, using a variety of authentic assessment tools (e.g., anecdotal records, checklists,

FIGURE 1
Sample checklist for reading (grades pre-K-3)

Student:

Date:

ESL Goal, ESL Standard: Goal 1, Standard 3

"To use English to communicate in social settings: Students will use learning strategies to extend their communicative competence" (TESOL, 1997, p. 39).

Progress indicator	Student performed task independently (✓)	Student performed task with help (✓)	Student was unable to perform the task (✓)
Understands new vocabulary			
Recites poems			
Retells stories			
Uses new vocabulary in story retelling			
Formulates hypotheses about events in a story			

rating scales, portfolios) to fairly assess the placement and progress of their students and to plan instruction. Authentic assessment tools will provide direct insights on the students' literacy development and showcase students' progress and accomplishments. Assessments also serve as mechanisms that reveal what instruction needs to be modified to help the students reach the necessary standards and goals.

Adopt a multidimensional approach including alternative assessments (AAs). Reading is a complex interactive process. According to O'Malley and Valdez Pierce (1996), the term *interaction* refers not only to the interactions between the reader, the text, and a given context but also to the interactions among the mental processes involved in comprehension. These range from the decoding of words on the printed page to making use of prior knowledge and "making inferences and evaluating what is read" (p. 94). Indeed,

the assessment of reading ability does not end with the measurement of comprehension. Strategic pathways to full understanding are often important factors to in-

clude in assessing students, especially in the case of most classroom assessments that are formative in nature. (Brown, 2004, p. 185)

For this reason, it is important that teachers consider AAs to document ELLs' performance and growth in reading.

Alternative assessments provide teachers with a more complete picture of what students can or cannot do as they encounter reading materials. Through the use of AAs, teachers gain a direct view of the students' reading development in a variety of contexts and under different circumstances. AAs go beyond traditional testing, which provides a very narrow and discrete view of the students' capabilities when confronted with a reading task. They also evolve naturally from regular classroom activities and allow students the opportunity to show growth in literacy as they learn and practice.

Alternative assessment tasks are a more appropriate and fair way to measure ELLs' progress (Gottlieb, 1995; O'Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996; Smolen, Newman, Wathen, & Lee, 1995). They provide teachers with the opportunity to identify

what students need regarding reading instruction and literacy support. From information gathered as a result of AAs, teachers can devise a plan to instruct students in more meaningful ways because they have direct insights on the needs of each one. Finally, through AAs teachers can assess ELLs' literacy in more naturally occurring situations and thus document students' progress more thoroughly and progressively (Ehlers-Zavala, 2002).

As teachers attempt to put into practice multiple AAs, they may want to approach this task incrementally and consider the following practical suggestions:

- Learn what constitutes alternative or authentic assessment of ELLs. Examples of AAs generally include observations (i.e., anecdotal records, rating scales, checklists), journals (i.e., buddy journals, dialogue journals, reader response), conferring, questionnaires, portfolios, and self-assessments.
- Develop a philosophy of second-language acquisition that will assist you in the evaluation of ELLs.
- Know your district's curriculum of the program before planning assessments. The curriculum (specifically the reading curriculum) in any given school program must be sensitive to the students' needs, the institutional expectations, and the availability of resources. Because these will vary from setting to setting, it is nearly impossible to attempt to prescribe any guidelines or universal curriculum for all instructional settings (Grabe, 2004); thus, teachers must know the reality of their own localities.
- Implement the assessments once you have understood the features of the tools available and have determined the appropriateness of implementation at any given time.
- Plan assessments that yield data that can be used for evaluative and instructional purposes.
- Ensure that students understand how to use self-assessments (i.e., logs, journals).
- Use the results of your assessments to modify instruction.
- Communicate assessment results to the respective stakeholders (i.e., students, parents,

administrators, community) in clear and meaningful ways.

The key to successful alternative assessment is thorough planning and organization (O'Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996). As teachers plan, they should identify the purpose of the assessment, plan the assessment itself, involve students in self- and peer assessment, develop rubrics or scoring procedures, set standards, select assessment activities, and record teacher observations. For a helpful reminder of effective assessment practices, Figure 2 offers a teacher's bookmark on alternative assessment practices that Ehlers-Zavala developed.

Assess in nontraditional ways. Teachers should keep in mind that all assessments in English are also assessments *of* English. Because ELLs are in the process of acquiring language as they acquire content, teachers need to ensure that their assessment addresses the linguistic component of the learning continuum. Therefore, teachers should provide ELLs with opportunities to demonstrate knowledge in nontraditional ways (O'Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996). Specifically, teachers might consider some of the following suggestions when assessing ELLs:

- Involve students in performance assessment tasks.
- Offer students opportunities to show and practice knowledge in nonlanguage-dependent ways through Venn diagrams, charts, drawings, mind maps, or PowerPoint slides.
- Promote participation in nonthreatening situations that encourage experimentation with the target language of study. Assess language learning in the participation activities.
- Before assessing students, teachers can help ELLs develop reading strategies that in themselves could constitute alternative forms of literacy assessment (Lenski, Daniel, Ehlers-Zavala, & Alvayero, 2004).
- Use the Language Experience Approach as assessment rather than just for instructional purposes (Lenski & Nierstheimer, 2004). As students read their language-experience stories, informally assess their oral reading fluency.

FIGURE 2
A teacher's bookmark on alternative assessment practices

Know your curriculum and collaborate with other teachers when possible.



Determine what, who, why, how, and when to assess.



Ensure that your students understand your assessments.



Reflect on the results of your assessments.



Modify instruction in a meaningful way informed by your assessments.



Communicate the results of your assessments to stakeholders.



Use technology to facilitate your assessment practices.



Modify traditional assessments. There will be times when teachers have to give ELLs traditional assessments. Some tests should not be modified because their results are based on standardized procedures. If in doubt, teachers should contact an administrator or bilingual teacher about which tests

should or should not be modified. A rule of thumb, however, is that teacher-written tests can be modified for ELLs, but achievement tests should not be modified. When teachers modify traditional tests for ELLs, they learn what students know about the content without the barrier of language knowledge, and the assessment more accurately reflects what ELLs know and can do.

Teachers may consider the following assessment modifications appropriate for newcomers and ELLs who are in the process of acquiring English:

- Permit students to answer orally rather than in writing.
- Allow a qualified bilingual professional to assist with the assessment.
- Consider offering ELLs the possibility to demonstrate reading progress and growth through group assessments.
- Allow students to provide responses in multiple formats.
- Accept a response in the students' native language if translation support systems exist in the school or community.
- Allow ELLs to use a bilingual dictionary in the beginning stages of their language-learning experience in English (United States Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2000).

Teachers who are developing ELLs' literacy but still need modifications for accurate assessment information might consider the following suggestions:

- Have an aide record students' answers.
- Divide assessment time into small chunks.
- Use visuals.
- Add glossaries in English or the first language.
- Simplify vocabulary.
- Begin the assessment with several examples.
- Simplify assessment directions.
- Write questions in the affirmative rather than the negative and also teach sentence structures so that students are familiar with the language of testing.
- Give students breaks during assessments.

- Give directions in students' native languages.

Assessment materials, activities, and language issues

Assessment should be conducted through the use of authentic reading materials that connect to the students' real-life experiences in their personal and academic contexts. "Literacy is intimately bound up with their lives outside the classroom in numerous and complex cultural, social, and personal ways that affect their L1 and L2 identities" (Burns, 2003, p. 22). For ELLs, literacy in English can be an extension of their identity both in school and at home.

Assessment materials should also be adjusted to the student's English proficiency level because a text that is not comprehensible will only measure the vocabulary that a student does not know. A valid look at an ELL's literacy can only be accomplished through pragmatic integrative assessment. When teachers use purposeful communication and authentic material, the results of the assessment are more useful.

Clearly, materials used to informally assess ELLs may be different from those that a teacher would choose to assess the literacy level of mainstream students.

A book that fosters an emotional link between the student and the written word is an authentic text for that particular reader, even if it is not what would ordinarily be appropriate for a grade level. Such a book may not be an academic text. Instead, for a young reader, it could be a comic book about Spider-Man or another superhero. For an adolescent female of Cuban American descent, it might be the chronicle of a young teenager's immigration, *Flight to Freedom* (Veciana-Suarez, 2002). When students determine whether a text is authentic, they use many important thinking processes. As teachers talk with students about why books are authentic to them, they can learn a great deal of information about students' literacy interests (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983; Davidman & Davidman, 2001).

Engage students in collaborative assessment activities. Collaborative work helps ELLs feel safe, work comfortably at a level where incoming stimuli are kept at a minimum, and demonstrate litera-

cy to teachers in informal ways (Kagan & Kagan, 1998; Krashen, 1993, 2003). Because conversations between students can scaffold learning (Vygotsky, 1934/1978), collaborative assessment activities provide a powerful lens through which to view ELLs' literacy.

Collaboration permits students to showcase their talents and work in a manner that is a good fit with their individual learning styles and intelligence (Kagan & Kagan, 1998). As students collaborate, they should be free to code-switch without being penalized. Code-switching is moving between the native language and English during an activity and helps ELLs keep conversations moving. It is a natural occurrence among bilinguals, and there are many purposes behind its practice; for example, to stress a point in communication, to express a concept for which there is no equivalent in the other language, to indicate friendship, to relate a conversation, or to substitute a word in another language (Baker, 2001). Teachers should bear in mind that when code-switching compensates for lack of knowledge (e.g., of a word or a grammatical structure), ELLs should be helped to acquire the linguistic knowledge they lack. This type of instructional support should be given in a friendly manner to ensure that students do not feel they are being punished for using their native languages (Freeman & Freeman, 2003).

Teachers can also add an important collaborative component to the instruction and assessment of ELLs when they invite families and community members to participate in literacy projects (Moll & Gonzalez, 1994; Young & Helvie, 1996). For example, parents who are fluent in the native language and also know English can assist teachers in some informal assessment measures. Parents can talk with students in both languages and can alert teachers to difficulties that students face. Parents can also help students record lists of books that they have read. If parents do not know how to write in English, they can keep tape-recorded logs, or simply speak to teachers in the native language. Teachers who are unable to find bilingual parents can seek assistance from bilingual paraprofessionals or from local and state resource centers.

Use the students' native languages as an assessment resource. Students should be allowed to use their language abilities to complete literacy tasks

(Brisk, 2002) and to express their knowledge in the language they know best when being assessed. Oftentimes, knowledge of the first language means that students possess linguistic skills that can assist them in mastering literacy tasks in the second language (Cummins, 1981). One of these tasks may relate to understanding the meaning of words. Sometimes students may think of what words mean in their first language and successfully guess the meaning of the equivalents in the second language. For example, a word like *compensation* may be understood by native speakers of Spanish if they know the Spanish term *compensación*. In this case, students may use a combination of letter-sound correspondence knowledge and pronunciation to figure out the meaning of the word. During assessment, ELLs may demonstrate their knowledge more accurately if teachers allow them to use their native languages to process their answers.

Encourage self-assessment

Self-assessments convey the message that students are in control of their own learning and the assessment of that learning. As students engage in self-assessment practices, they learn how their past learning is shaping their new learning. This type of assessment practice helps students understand that they can direct their learning, which paves the way to teaching students to become independent readers and learners.

As teachers use self-assessment with ELLs, they should keep in mind that ELLs vary in their linguistic ability and, by definition, are in the process of learning a language. Thus, teachers should be aware that ELLs might experience difficulties at first with self-assessments. In order to assist ELLs, teachers should provide them with support through substantial scaffolding activities. Teachers should model responses to self-assessment tasks and then provide students with group, peer, and finally independent practice. For example, a teacher might want to assess students' prior knowledge of a topic for a book students are going to read. Teachers might want to have students engage in self-assessment practices, but prior to asking students to do so, teachers need to model how to engage in a self-assessment activity. An example of a strategy that could be used for student self-assessment is a Connections chart (Lenski &

Ehlers-Zavala, 2004). This strategy encourages students to read a story; stop at given points; and make connections to other books, past learning, and themselves. (See Figure 3 for an example of a Connections chart.) When students are engaged in this type of reflective activity, they learn how to use an important literacy strategy and provide teachers with information that could be used for making instructional decisions.

Effective teaching means effective assessments

English-language learners are not a homogeneous group; they can range from students who are emergent literacy learners in their first language to those who are proficient readers. Literacy in the first language mediates literacy in the second language (Odlin, 1989). Thus, literacy experiences that students may have had in their first language will influence their ability to acquire literacy in English. Because the range of literacy proficiencies may be quite vast in any classroom with ELLs, traditional testing formats are inadequate for the evaluation of the English literacy of the nonnative English speaker.

The most effective types of assessments teachers can use to make instructional decisions for ELLs are authentic performance-based assessments such as observations, journals, portfolios, and self-assessments. Performance assessment tasks allow teachers to simultaneously instruct and assess. When students undertake the process of completing an authentic performance assessment, the students plan, self-monitor, and evaluate progress continually, while creating a product. Throughout this process, the teacher is able to engage in ongoing informal assessment of the student's progress. No professionally prepared protocol will result in student learning if only a single test result is used to inform the development of the curricula. When authentic, performance-based assessments are administered throughout the year, they can provide not only a much more accurate picture of students' literacy development but also documented formative data that chart the students' literacy development.

Effective teaching, above all, is the key to the sustained achievement of all students, especially

FIGURE 3 Connections chart	
Story title	Author
Connections to other books	
Connections to school learning	
Connections to self	

ELLs who struggle with reading. With effective teaching comes the teacher's ability to meet the needs of all students at all points in the educational continuum. Teachers must develop the ability to tailor instruction that helps all ELLs achieve English literacy. However, without a thorough understanding of students' background and current literacy levels, teachers will have difficulty providing effective instruction to meet the unique needs of ELL students.

Although instruction is the key to student learning, authentic assessment can help teachers understand the needs of their struggling readers who are English-language learners. Teachers can use assessment results to evaluate student progress and plan the direction classroom instruction and learning will take. Only when measurement, assessment, evaluation, and excellent teaching are present in classrooms will ELLs make real progress toward literacy.

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